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What impact do the institutions of society have on work? To answer this question a distinction was drawn between two models of social institutions, contrasting their characteristics and pointing out the implication of each model for an understanding of work and the production institution. It was concluded that the "multi-equal" model of social institutions provides a more adequate picture of industrial societies. This document sets forth the analytical grounds for developing the "multi-equal" model as well as implications for work that may be drawn from this model. Predictions are made regarding the relations between institutions and work in the future. (Author/JS)

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WORK AND NON-WORK: INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES*

Robert Dubin

What impact do the institutions of society have on work? How may institutions serve to encourage or impede changes in the world of work? These are difficult questions to answer. Furthermore, many of the answers are speculative.

Viewed from the perspective of the future, patterns are emerging in developed industrial societies. We will trace these patterns, projecting them beyond the present to capture a glimpse of the interactions among social institutions and work in the world of tomorrow.[1/]

Focal Institutions

Simple societies contain a focal institution, like the family, that dominates the other institutional spheres. The dominance is direct and pervasive. Behavior in the subordinate institutions is significantly derived from position and participation in the focal institution. Work may be performed, for example, only by individuals who occupy designated positions within the familial institution. Who does what work, when, in what manner and amount cannot be in conflict with the individual's behaviors in his family setting. The political institution may be similarly keyed to the familial institution, with elders and/or males having the right to exercise polity decisions. Such societies are, therefore, able to achieve coherence and unity because behavior in all institutional spheres is congruent with the dominant pattern of behavior associated with the focal institution.

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Historians of western societies have given much attention to identifying the focal institution that has given unity to modern societies. Their consensus is that the production institution of modern urban-industrial society is focal for all others. This conclusion is impressive for it follows from analyses as disparate as Marxian (emphasizing materialistic conceptions of history) and non-Marxian (emphasizing growth of productive capacity and a market economy).

In industrial societies, even religious institutions are subordinated to the institutions of production. For example, Weber [2] and Tawney [3] have shown how religion has evolved its theology so as to be not only supportive of, but even subordinate to the industrial institution. At a more mundane level, social critics have commented on how the family has become subordinate to the demands of work, especially among managers and executives,[4] and how the consumer society, with its particular styles of living, has become so closely derivative from the manufacture and sale of consumer products.[5] Moreover, the rather simplistic analyses of the muckrackers and radical critics of American capitalism's great boom periods saw the industrialists greedily assuming social and political power, both in pursuit of their economic goals and as a consequence of achieving them.[6]

Recent more subtle commentary on power elites has also pursued the dominant argument that the center of social power nurtures itself and is sustained by the focal institution of our present society, the production institution in the form of the "military-industrial complex". Even Keynesian economic arguments,[7] though appearing to suggest the preeminence of the governmental institution (with its emphasis on economic development through

governmental policies of taxation, public welfare, etc.), are directed toward the more fundamental goal of encouraging and sustaining the production institution. Galbraith[8/] and Boulding,[9/] in parallel analyses, have shown how the organizational form of modern society is patterned after the structure of modern industry.

Critics of conceptions labeling the production institution as the focal one in our urban industrial society typically argue that other so-called focal institutions compete for precedence. For example, the whole movement in humanistic psychology, beginning at least with Freud and reaching its climax in the various schools of group dynamics, has attempted to assert that the real focal institution is the company of intimate, face-to-face associates. For a time, the group dynamics movement urged that it, too, was a handmaiden of the production institution by proclaiming the virtues of self-knowledge and interpersonal competence as indispensible to organizational effectiveness and increased productivity.[10/] Lately, however, the emphasis has shifted away from this to a preoccupation with the possibility that intimate group life, as in a commune, is really the focal institution of the society. Creative thought has even been devoted to elaborating and inventing new ways to intensify interpersonal interaction and shared experiencing, through such means as nude encounter groups and sessions with such provocative titles as "Joy, More Joy", "Human Potential", etc.[11/]

The purpose of this brief and incomplete survey of current analytical schemes for understanding the institutions of society has been to point out the common feature of diverse analytical approaches. They all are anchored in the belief that each society has a focal institution. The focal

institution may vary among societies, or may change in the history of a given society. At any one time, social unity is dependent upon the integrating consequences of the dominance of a single focal institution.

I conclude the focal institution model is an inadequate one. The alternative model proposed has special utility in providing a base for understanding the relations between work and social institutions in the 21st century.

Multi-Equal Institutions

In seeking answers to the questions concerning the interaction of institutions and work, I have found a model more useful than that of the focal institution. This alternative formulation can be described by the term "multi-equal institutions." This term emphasizes that in a society there may be several or many institutions having significant impact on behavior that is equally salient for the individual, whether or not these behavioral demands are consistent with each other, or made so by the dominance of a focal institution.

I propose that society's major institutions are basically independent of each other and that they, therefore, impinge upon behavior very differently and in a far more complicated way than that assumed by advocates of the focal institution conceptualization. I see institutions as interacting and essentially <u>competing</u> entities. The net effect is to reinforce their mutual isolation--in sharp contrast with the older view that all institutions are dependent upon and subservient to the so-called focal institution. In my view then, a kind of elegant institutional symbiosis is created, and a

modern society becomes institutionally heterogeneous, but not necessarily less capable of functioning.

There are four characteristics of the institutional structure of a modern urban-industrial society from which may be derived the features of the multi-equal institutional model. These characteristics are: (1) the physical segregation of institutions; (2) the temporal segregation of institutions; (3) the functional segregation of institutions; and (4) the organizational structure of institutional operations. We will examine each of these dimensions in turn.

Physical Segregation

One of the most obvious differences between a primitive society and a modern one is the literal segregation of institutions in space. This has important consequences for the citizen of modern societies. Evidence abounds of the segregation of institutions from each other in space. For example, this is revealed in the way in which productive activities are separated from family life. In the contemporary world where people live and where they work often are separated by distances of miles. But it is equally true that religious functions may be carried on at considerable distance from either productive or familial behaviors. Educational activities have been moved out of the home and are certainly not located, at least during the period of formal education, within the physical boundaries of any other institution. Political action often takes place at centers far removed from the areas affected by the decisions reached. Save for the way in which television has put recreation back into the home setting, a great deal of recreation takes place within its own distinctive physical setting. There

are endless examples that make clear the fact that the institutions of a modern, complex society are physically separated and, therefore, segregated from each other.

This sharply contrasts with the image of the primitive tribe carrying out all its institutional activities within a very limited geographic area, and often using the same structures or the same physical locality for a variety of institutional practices. For the participant there was never any sense that physical separation of institutions from each other might suggest their segregation as well.

The citizen of an urban-industrial society needs to move through space in order to go from one to another institutional setting. The expenditure of effort required may reach such proportions that the individual could choose, given the opportunity, to omit or refuse participation simply because of this fact alone. Thus, one of the consequences for the individual is the fact that the expenditure of energy required literally to move into a new institutional setting may contribute to voluntarism with regard to whether the effort is worthwhile.

Temporal Segregation

The institutions in which modern man participates are also segregated in the time of day, week, or year during which the individual participates in their behaviors. Nonwork periods have been highly institutionalized so that they follow serially upon work periods. Within the daily cycle a regular shift of work is followed by a longer period of nonwork during which the individual is more or less free to choose the institution of his participation. In the larger weekly cycle, the off time from work is concentrated in the

weekend period. Over the annual cycle the vacation is a concentrated period of time away from work.

It is characteristic of temporal segregation of institutions that relatively large blocks of time are utilized for participation in any one. There is clearly not a ready movement back and forth among the institutional settings over any short-range time cycle.

The temporal segregation of instutitions means that the personnel with whom one interacts in each institutional setting will have relatively little overlap with the personnel of other settings. Thus, one significance of temporal segregation of institutional settings from each other is that interaction takes place with different people as the boundary of an institution is crossed into another. This obviously leads to a disjunction among institutions and the assurance that the society as a whole no longer may be characterized as integrated since participation in its several institutions is distributed among many different individuals.

Furthermore, from the standpoint of individual motivation, the temporal segregation of institutions provides the time frame within which the possibility of deferring gratification may be estimated. Thus, vacations and holidays can be anticipated from any moment in time to the time at which they begin, and off time from work in the cycle of a single day can be clearly measured from any point within the work period. The temporal segregation of institutions provides a very important means for measuring from a given point in time when the individual will have the opportunity to move into another institutional setting. The deferment of gratification, if it is gratifying to the individual to move from where he is to another institution, can be measured accurately on a time scale.

The relation of time to deferment of gratification has special meaning not often noted. Usually it is believed that the deferment of gratification is related to rewards at some real but indefinitely timed point in the future. However, the rewards of deferred gratifications in nonwork institutions can now be calculated precisely as to when they will occur.

The other side of the coin of the rewards produced by the gratifications deferred is the patience that may be inculcated during the deferment period. Thus, if it is clear that family participation or recreation may be enjoyed at a predictable time in the future, then some of the disadvantageous and unsatisfactory aspects of work may be endured. Consequently the predictability of times when movement occurs from the work institution to others, may make bearable the undesirable features of work itself. Or, even conversely, the deferred gratifications of returning to work after a prolonged absence may have positive consequences for motivation.

Functional Segregation

By functional segregation of institutions I simply mean that they become increasingly specialized in the performance of narrower and narrower ranges of function. Productive activities have clearly moved out of the family and home setting as have education and welfare services. The citizen soldier with his weapon above the fireplace has become the professional or conscript soldier. The family altar in religious services has increasingly been supplanted by the religious edifice and the professional religious ceremony.

Functional specialization has had three consequences for institutions. On the one hand, the greater the degree of functional specialization, the

more coherent can be the value system and related behaviors that characterize the institution. Each institution may become an island unto itself, internally consistent with regard to its central values, and reasonably coherent with regard to the behaviors designed to exemplify or achieve these values.

A second consequence of the functional specialization of the institutions is that they become increasingly divergent from each other with regard to values and behaviors. Profit and love may not be reconcilable within a single institution, but separately may be one goal of the production and the familial institutions respectively.

The functional specialization of institutions has also permitted the development of new institutions to serve those functions that are either newly created, or separated from institutions that had many functions to perform. Thus, the very specialization of institutions provides the mechanism by which new institutions are born. This is an important source of social change and behavioral innovation. For example, when the welfare and educational functions were taken out of the family institution and each given an institutional identity of its own, the entire social system was restructured through the creation of the two new institutions as well as the modification of one old institution. In a similar way, the welfare capitalism of the 19th and early 20th century in the United States lost much of its relevance when business and industry specialized further on the production of goods and services, and left the institutionalization of welfare activities to collective bargaining or specialized welfare institutions.

The effects of institutional functional specialization are to produce a greater coherence in values and behavior over a more limited range of the life cycle, and with the drawing in of the institutional boundary, to create

interstices within which new institutions may develop. Indeed, one of the pervasive evidences of rationality in modern life is the increasingly noticable functional specialization of institutions, each with a corresponding purity of values and associated behaviors. The rationality is further exhibited in the relative ease with which it is possible to recognize interstices among institutions and to create new ones to fulfill emerging functions, or those sluffed off from the specializing institutions.

For the individual, the functional specializations of the institutions in which he participates has two primary consequences. The first is that his whole view of life is neatly compartmentalized into recognizable institutional spheres that have a measurable degree of independence from each other. A man can be a good Christian for one hour on Sunday without feeling any inconsistency between that moment of pious self-image and a rather different world view and pattern of behavior when selling used cars on work days.

The second consequence for the individual is to increase the level of his autonomy. He is clearly no longer caught up in a dominant institution nor is he required to bring into accord his behavior in separate institutional settings with the values of a dominant institution. The world becomes relative in its values and required behaviors, and in the choices thus provided, the individual achieves his personal independence and behavioral autonomy. Relativism in values rather than a centrality of dominant values becomes the orientation of the modern citizen toward his social system. Every behavior can somehow or other find justification if it is located in an appropriate institutional setting. But at the same time, the citizen is

not puzzled or shocked to find that values of one institutional area do not carry over into others.

Organizational Structure of Institutions

A very important feature that contributes to institutional segregation is the organizational structure that characterizes some of the most significant institutions. Productive activities are not carried out in general; they are carried out in business organizations. Education is not practiced in the normal daily realm of the society; it is pursued in school organizations. Natural religion is odd; organized religion is characteristic. Battles are fought by organized military units; welfare is distributed by a professional bureaucracy; and science is done in highly organized laboratories. The areas of institutional behavior are overlayed with specific organizations that not only fulfill the general institutional functions but do so through unique organizations. The individual, therefore, many times engages in an area of institutional behavior only provided he becomes a member or a client of an organization.

Organizations not only carry out institutional goals, but have unique organizational characteristics as well. This means that an individual, to participate, must meet the organization's special requirements for membership or clienthood. Thus, even within single institutions, the behavior in them is further fractured because the individual has to articulate with an organization in order to participate.

Still another feature of the organized character of institutional behavior is that between organizations performing similar institutional functions, there may be considerable variability. An ethical drugstore and

one that merchandises drugs as a sideline to its sundries may both perform commercial functions but certainly do so within quite diffrrent value frameworks, and require very distinctive personnel to do their respective jobs.

The Cement That Binds

We have emphasized how institutions are isolated from each other. This naturally raises the question of how a society is knitted together. The answer to this question lies in a well established distinction of sociology.

Durkheim, in explaining the basis for social unity, perceived two different bases.[12/] First, a broad consensus may exist about the dominant values of a society, and this consensus may provide a weld among all realms of life. Durkheim called this form of social unity <u>mechanical</u> solidarity. He also was well aware, however, of the segregation of institutions from each other, as we have just described it. Using a biological analogy, Durkheim saw institutions as the constituent parts of society, united through the interdependence of parts to the whole. He called this second form of social unity <u>organic</u> solidarity.

Mechanical solidarity, or the consensual basis for social unity, is clearly tied to the focal institution viewpoint. Values are more readily shared if they are simple and integrated. A focal institution can provide the conditions for achieving consensus over the values of the society as a whole, precisely because the values of the focal institution dominate all value systems of the society.

How then is it possible that social unity can be maintained in a social system characterized by multi-equal institutions? Is the interdependence of institutions sufficient to bind them together to constitute a social unity?

It is necessary to examine two central issues here: (1) the meaning of interdependence among functionally specialized institutions; and (2) the grounds for social unity when a high level of functional specialization of institutions has been attained.

Interdependence among functionally specialized institutions is best understood by analogy with biological models. Ecological chains of life specify how food and other resources link to individual biological species, which in turn are interrelated among themselves. Clearly, the resources and species do not operate at a level of consensus about their relations to each other. Nevertheless, the chains of interdependence linking them may be highly complex and result in disaster when any point in the chain is broken.

By analogy, functional specialization and segregation of institutions from each other generate a chain of interdependence such that any failure of a given institution to be effective, or a change in its function, may have consequences upon those institutions with which it is interrelated. Sociologists have tended to describe these chains of interdependence by calling attention to the "unintended consequences of purposive social action." The unintended consequences are very often located in institutions interdependent with the one in which the change is made. For example, the movement of productive activities out of the home as a consequence of decisions that significant benefits result from factory production, ultimately led to a middle class way of life for females that has measurable consequences in terms of boredom, a sense of purposelessness, and sometimes deviant individual behavior. A second consequence, at least in the United States, has been an increasing proportion of married women who are active in the labor force.

The movement of the wife and mother into the labor force has, in turn, had unanticipated consequences on the nature of the family life. A third level of interaction has been the long-time political activity of females seeking equal rights in the labor force as well as in other realms of life. In this very simple and obvious illustration it becomes clear that there may be very pervasive interconnections among institutions so that a change in one often generates one or more responses in the other. The change and response together keep the institutions in balance with each other.

The changes in institutional functions and their unanticipated consequences in other institutions are largely incremental in scope. Fundamental and revolutionary changes are seldom planned, or if planned, seldom produce the anticipated revolutionary consequences. An outstanding example was the introduction of automation into the productive institutions whose predicted consequences for family life, leisure, and political behavior have yet to be realized after almost two decades of utilization of automation in industry and commerce.

We may then think of interdependence among institutions as being characterized at one of two levels. If we view the daily round of life of the individual, then the interdependence among institutions in which he participates actively is determined by the manner in which he allocates time and energy to its several institutional segments.

On a grander scale, interdependence among institutions is revealed in the ability of a total society to organize social functions necessary for its survival. The institutional structure of a society is fleshed out with sufficient completeness to insure that essential functions are fulfilled,

and once fulfilled, that additional desirable functions will also be attended to.

Some degree of consciousness about interdependence among institutions has to be developed at both the individual and societal levels. For the individual it is necessary that there be some decisions regarding the institutions in which to participate, the order of participation, and the extent of participation. At the societal level there is similarly some notion about what is functionally required in the society to continue its existence. Furthermore, there may be some allocation of total social resources and citizen time expenditures among the existing institutional spheres. A military draft of males for service is clearly a social allocation of citizen time to the military functions.

The individual and collective awareness of institutions may be the foundation for the resistance that institutions have to change. When an individual is aware of an institutional setting in which he is behaving, or specific social arrangements are made to enact the requirements of an institution, the very playing out of roles makes for behavioral commitment to the institution. Commitment resulting from doing is strongly held. Indeed, the form of an institution and its accompanying behaviors may survive after the function has been changed or even has disappeared. In the production institution, there are many survivals of earlier institutional practices that are no longer truly functional. For example, in the United States and most of Western Europe, many welfare practices survive in work organizations in spite of the fact that major welfare functions have been separately institutionalized.

Durkheim's idea of mechanical solidarity in which values are shared across institutions is compatible with the focal institution view of social organization. The multi-equal characterization of the institutions of a society sees the social bond as generated from the interdependence of institutions. From this second point of view each institution is valued for its functional contribution. This is Durkheim's idea of organic solidarity. While there may be some common values characterizing the society as a whole and revealed especially when the society is endangered, the daily lives of citizens are lived out among institutions with differing values. Whatever social unity is characteristic of the society derives from the functional coherence and interdependence of its institutions.

The foregoing paragraphs present an image of social institutions with only secondary attention to their impact on the person. This is a deliberate limitation since it is intended that this chapter contribute to an understanding of institutions, and not individual adjustment to them. However, the remainder of this chapter places greater emphasis upon individual behavior since inevitably any speculations about the shape of institutions in the future can be grasped better by considering their behavioral consequences.

Implications for Work

Assuming that work has always been associated with the production institution, what are the relationships between the world of work and our concept of multi-equal institutions?[13/] Of special importance to the theme of this volume are such questions as: what are likely to be the consequences of these speculations for valuing work and citizenship in the world of the

future; and how will interdependencies and interactions among institutions act to advance or to impede change in those functions which today are labeled as "work" and/or in the loci where "work" occurs? Below, we present our efforts to answer these questions within three broad areas: (1) changes in the meaning of "work"; (2) changes in organizing or structuring that function which we call "work"; and, (3) speculations about the nature of the adaptive responses likely to be made by work organizations.

Meaning of Work

So long as the productive institution was dominant in advanced industrial societies, the central core of good citizenship was defined by the work the individual performed. Social standing was accorded differentially to occupations and professions. Financial rewards for different occupations and types of work also varied and those without paying jobs--the unemployable, the unemployed, and children, women, the elderly, and the infirm--were accorded relatively low social esteem.

The affluent society has introduced a new dimension for evaluating citizenship. A good citizen has come to be identified with being a healthy, active individual who is capable of consuming a wide variety of goods and services.[14/] Accordingly, the affluent society, which can also afford to be the welfare society, has made central to its social policy the provision of goods and services in a manner to insure that the economically less able could consume at a level satisfactory to accepted notions of equity. In the United States the growth of welfare activities has also been accompanied by the more recent acceptance of the idea of a guaranteed annual income, the amount and right to which is unrelated to productive work.

The central idea underlying a new definition of the meaning of good citizenship is that of the individual as consumer. The appropriate and significant consumption of goods and services becomes the definition of the good citizen. The idea of a right to consume underlies all demands for societal support of good housing, good health, good environment, and so forth.

If citizenship in the future comes increasingly to be defined as a good consumerhood, then the relations of citizens to productive work becomes complicated. It will be recalled that all utopias foresee the possibility that man can be relieved, through the major portion of his lifetime, of the need to engage in productive labor.[15/] The distinguishing feature among utopian dreams was the manner in which each utopia invented ways to use the waking hours of men no longer required in productive labor. In the more traditional utopian pictures, a man was free to engage in the leisure pursuits of the rich, since that was the only historical example of non-work activities. Thus, men were to turn to art and literature and music and the other "cultural" activities that improve man's mind and realize his capabilities. By and large, what the utopians did not realize in foreseeing the alternatives to working behavior was the possibility that an affluent society, which produces an overabundance of goods and services, needs a market constantly capable of consuming these goods and services.

The emerging social system is much more realistically oriented to this problem. We already see that the consumer will become, and is already becoming, the valued image of the good citizen. Indeed, even what Veblen called "conspicious consumption," which he viewed as a form of social status

one-upmanship, now gets converted into social approval because it moves the goods from the market and keeps the economy going.[16/] The ability to consume and the willingness to do so has become one of the precious indicators of the state of the economy, regularly measured by the University of Michigan Survey Research Center in its quarterly survey of consumer buying intentions. This, by the way, is a development that is not limited to capitalistic societies but is just as characteristic of socialists societies.

Some of the implications of making work a secondary activity to non-work pursuits will be examined below. At this stage I simply want to point out that the image of man as worker, with work being the dominant motif in defining self and social role, is being replaced by a new image of the citizen in which his consumer activities are central.

The revision in the meaning of work will have a profound impact upon the educational institution. The assumption sustaining the educational system is that during the period when the child is most pliable, and extending through early adulthood for those capable of learning high level skills, the society should devote considerable resources to the socialization of its young citizens for a lifetime of productive work. In all societies, capitalist and socialist, formal education is tied directly to the preparation of the youngster for a productive role in the society. At the most basic level this inculcates ideas of work discipline, regular attendance, obedience to authority, responsiveness to a defined role in relation to rules (student in relation to teacher becoming worker in relation to supervisor), and the valuing of self in terms of what is turned out or pursued in the educational system (becoming productivity in the work situation). Beyond learning the

necessary disciplines that make effective transitions into productive work, the students may also learn technical skills requisite to working. These include literacy, the ability to do some level of arithmetic or mathematics, and low or high levels of technical knowledge ranging from typing to atomic physics.

The situation of the future may become revolutionary for the educational institution. It is conceivable, for example, that technical skill training may be transferred to the work institution where it can be made very specific and pertinent to an industry or occupation and probably can be done more effectively and efficiently than in the educational organization. Thus, vocational skill education may be transferred increasingly out of the educational institution.

There would obviously follow from this shift in educational content a concern with substituting a new content. Thus, learning of consumerhood in all its facets may come to be the central teaching function of the educational institution. This obviously means far more than the consumption of physical goods and services although it should not be overlooked that even in this area a good deal more might be done than is presently by way of educating a citizenry for effective consumption.[17/]

The daily relationship of children to school may also be modified. Should a style of living rather than occupation competency be the primary socialization goal of the school institution, this goal may be more effectively achieved if there is a significant period of in-resident instruction rather than having the pupil move every day from home to school and back again. The English middle class male has been effectively socialized to

his role by attendance at resident "public" schools; the youth in Israeli kibbutzim live a common life with peers in separate quarters during schooling as an important feature of socialization to the collective life of the settlements; and the residential schools of communist societies serve similar functions providing effective socialization for their participants.

Another area in which the meaning of work will have an impact is on ideas about work cycles in the life history of the individual. In the modern industrial world the male can typically expect to work approximately 45-48 years, beginning in late adolescence and extending to the sixth decade of his life. Females, if they do work, will also normally engage in productive labor in the same period of the life cycle. The most vigorous periods of the life cycle have been dominated by the need to work for a living. It is perfectly conceivable that if citizenship is defined as consumerhood, the point in the life cycle when work activity will be required may be shifted away from the vigorous period of life. This, for example, could be done in large blocks of time so that the individual might enjoy the ages 20 to 30 developing himself as a consumer of non-working time and then turn attention to making a later productive contribution to the society. Alternatively, the work -- non-work cycle may be based on successive intervals of productive work and freedom from work so that every other year might become the off time from work. Or, the individual may be given advance opportunities to determine how he proposes to spend his own lifetime by choosing his own schedule of work and non-work period. Indeed, the extension of individual liberty may have its most profound development in precisely the opportunity of the individual to make a personal choice of when he will

fit productive labor into his own life cycle. The "hippies" of the 70's exemplified personal choice in regards to working and not working within their early adulthood.

We may then summarize the impact of the changing meaning of work as representing: (a) a shift in the definition of good citizenship from that of being a productive individual to that of being a socially relevant consumer; (b) a significant modification in the function of the educational institution moving it from a vocational preparation function to the function of socializing for the new society; and (c) a redefinition of work in the life cycle of the individual.

Organization of Work

The most obvious characterization of modern industrial and commercial work is that it is being rapidly changed by developing technologies--in the materials used, the production processes employed, and the methods by which products and services are delivered. Two general organizational problems of the impact of technology are: (1) to articulate effectively with the labor market in the utilization of new recruits or the available and disadvantaged labor forces; and (2) to readily abandon physical plant and even present location to better utilize a newer technology.

With the modern technology in the plant and office and not in the school classroom, it becomes increasingly difficult to depend on the schools at all levels to produce technically sophisticated workers. The equipment on which to learn is simply not available in the classroom. This is especially true at the common school level of "voc. ed." It is also encountered in highly technical fields, like accounting and engineering, where a newly hired person

has to undergo intensive training in the particular operations of his employer, which may differ significantly from what was learned in school.

School skill training changes much less rapidly than does technology in the real world. Work organizations cannot expect, much less demand that the skill training of their labor forces be done in the educational institution. Indeed, when labor market conditions require the employment of adults who are in the ranks of the "disadvantaged," the irrelevancy of the school institution becomes even more marked since schools have limited age ranges and competence levels for admission.

The simple fact of the matter is that notions of efficiency and benefits achieved in relation to costs have plunged industrial and commercial organizations very much into the function of providing technical training as the technology is modified in their own organizations. This is true for the new recruits and especially true for those already in the organization with enough seniority to have a claim on re-training and re-education rights. We can predict that as technology continues to change and the pace of change increases over a broader range of industries, the isolation of work organizations from the educational institution will become even greater. Furthermore, there will continue to be significant transfer of technical training to the work organization.

A second consequence of institutional segregation for work organizations will be the greater geographical mobility that will be afforded to the location of work organizations. Improvements in transportation technology have now removed significant limitations on where productive activities may be located. Furthermore, the economics of capital investment in plant and equipment, including tax treatment, has made the requirement of continued

utilization of obsolete facilities a less pressing concern in corporate decision making. Even the invention of lease-back arrangements for physical facilities has given to the corporation a new mobility it never had before in terms of locating its operations geographically.

It is also clear that the vastly increased labor mobility of the American labor force, and characteristically also of the European labor force, has meant that labor supply is a considerably less limiting factor in plant location than it may have been previously. This, of course, means that the familial institution and the production institution are no longer so intertwined that the former acts as a brake on development of the latter. The ties of family will not keep employees from moving to new work locations. By the same token, the movement of an industry to a new location may be accompanied by much greater movement of its employees to retain their employment.

Thus, greater mobility of industry and commerce with respect to location is enhanced by the isolation and segregation of the production institution from others. We are not, of course, suggesting that the segregation of the production institution would, by itself, increase mobility with regard to industrial location. Emphasized here is that given the economic and technological considerations that would encourage locational shifts, the segregation of institutions facilitates that possibility.

We predict that the pressures toward rapid technological change will require the internal reorganization of the typical work organization so that it is better able to articulate people with technology. This will mean more attention to the training and retraining of human resources within the work organization as one of the legitimate activities and costs of doing

business. In the very process of increasing dependence on internal training and retraining, the institution will become less strongly linked with the educational institution. The increased physical mobility characterizing work organizations is facilitated by the greater willingness of individuals to move to follow present employment opportunities or seek new ones. This is attributable at least in part to the loosening ties that the family has in holding the individual to his present place of residence. In short, it seems accurate to see these developments in the structure and operations of work organizations as being a product of the independence of the production institution from the educational and the familial institutions.

Adaptive Responses of Work Organizations

What are some of the adaptive options available when the production institution is segregated? First, it is clear that segregation of the production institution provides greater freedom for designing both work and work organizations which in the future will have greater variability in shape, structure, and functioning than ever before.

One of the more obvious adaptive responses will see sharp changes in organizational boundaries from their present rather fixed positions. A strong trend already is apparent in the increasing use of outside specialists, technologists, and services for carrying out functions that are entirely internal to various work organizations. This is usually done by subcontracting for the services. In addition, of course, many productive organizations also subcontract the manufacture of parts and of assemblies for the products manufactured under their own labels. Very lively and extensive commerce exists across the boundaries of organizations in the

purchase of services and goods that are utilized at least initially within the organization. Indeed, this practice has now reached the point where even the facilities, the plants, the equipment, the motor vehicles, and much more may be utilized on a lease-back arrangement rather than owned outright. All such arrangements of subcontracting and lease-back have very good fiscal justification. They also have as one of their functional consequences the opening up of the organizational boundaries so that it is increasingly unclear where any given "organization" may begin or where it ends. Over time, the mix between inside and outside activities may become more and more responsive to changes as the fiscal picture necessitates.

The permeable and open boundary characterizing modern work organizations has profound meaning for the employment relationship. The most obvious implication is that the organization paying the wage and salary bill may not, in fact, be the organization where productive work is accomplished. If the payoff for work is the cement that attaches an individual to any work organization, then the loyalty of the worker may be to the organization paying wages, and not necessarily to the organization where his work is actually accomplished. These trends may lead inevitably to competing organizational demands for loyalty, commitment, and attachment; and, if so, they also will clearly add to the burdens of supervision and may even require inventing wholly new styles of supervision.

A second implication for the work environment stemming from the blurring of organizational boundaries is that variety in work itself may be the product of moving successively among work organizations. The Kelly Girl who functions as a stenographer or typist may, simply by changing offices regularly, have significant variety introduced into her work, although technically her actual

job functions may remain unchanged. Similarly, the aeronautical engineer who works on a contract basis through an engineering subcontractor, may move throughout the industry, adding variety to his job even though his specific engineering contributions may be highly specialized and esoteric, regardless of the site of his activities.

The in-again, out-again character of work performance will undoubtedly enhance the sense of individual autonomy as well as improve the sense of variety in the work performed.

The obvious advantage to the organization where the work is actually performed lies in its ability to determine when to turn over its labor force according to need without incurring senority rights and myriad other impediments to rapid flexibility. This, in turn, will undoubtedly generate collective bargaining and social welfare demands for the vesting of retirement and health and welfare benefits in the individual so that no loss is incurred in moving among organizations, and no problems generated by the threat of such losses.

From the standpoint of the labor market and the availability of labor, the loss of permanent attachments by individuals as "company people" will generate an even greater emphasis on technical competence and skill as a prime basis for determining who will be employed at any given time, either directly or through a subcontractor. Organizations will become less and less concerned about whether the young man hired directly from college is the future president of the company, or whether the 20 year service employee should be retained as a mark of company loyalty to him for his long period of service even though his skills may no longer be required. The English

have used the phrase "meritocracy" to describe the general phenomenon of making paramount the technical performance and competence in judging the employees.[18/] The labor market will take on, as central, the merit criterion for hiring and retaining employees.

Another development having relevance for the opening of organizational boundaries is the growing importance of the new corporate form called conglomerates. A conglomerate specifically spreads across a number of different industries and maintains primarily just a financial linkage among its respective units. It is not only possible but often probable that managerial and executive personnel will be moved about and among the many separate units comprising a conglomerate. Criteria of skill, ability, and past performance are more likely to determine patterns of executive and managerial mobility than such factors as long service or dedicated devotion to a particular organization.

Since the employment contract will be for only a narrow portion of the total individual, his technical work performance, and since this will be increasingly less dominant in the total life of the individual, the likelihood is great that the image of "the organizational man" will simply disappear into limbo. Central to the organization man image was the belief that everything in his behavior and personality was bent to the organizational demands and needs. This will manifestly no longer be necessary and certainly no longer possible with a continuing segregation of the work institutions from other institutions. This development will finally be realized when the employment forms and pre-employment investigations no longer are concerned with the individual's behavior in non-work institutions.

It is also clear that considerable revisions will have to be made in the contemporary views with regard to turnover and seniority. Generally, turnover is viewed as a costly process other than in seasonal industries. Turnover may ultimately come to be valued because it permits a much more rapid reconstitution of a given work organization as its technology, products, and markets change.

One of the most interesting problems in the new industry and commerce will be the design of incentive systems for work. We foresee industry and commerce as requiring extremely rapid changes in the technological competence in the labor force. Incentives will need to be designed either to recruit those already possessing necessary skills or to "motivate" them toward actions designed to develop such skills. There will thus emerge growing emphasis upon the individual being open to a constant re-education throughout a good portion of his lifetime. Thus, an organization that promises that none of its semi-skilled and skilled employees will be doing the same thing five years from now will be able to offer a significant opportunity for those people who respond to an incentive of work variety. This, of course, is an approach not very frequently encountered at the present time. A cost to the employing organization may become the investment in training and re-education, with the benefits of being able to make rapid changes in technology or materials or markets more than offsetting the cost.

From the standpoint of the individual employee, there is likely to be a far greater variability in outlook, orientation, learned skills, and attitudes than presently characterizes the labor force. Here again we would see this resulting from the segregation of the various institutional sectors

from the others. If the family and educational institutions would no longer focus on the socialization of the child in his role as breadwinner, then the socialization process itself should produce greater ranges of variability among individuals than is presently true. This will mean, for example, many of the standard tests used to measure attitudes or orientation will be irrelevant in hiring the labor force of the future.

In general, it is probable that the new incentives to be developed for working will have a much shorter time perspective than has been characteristic of the past. Many welfare functions now attached to the work organization will be specialized in a welfare institution and separated from the productive organization. Retirement, if it is vested in the individual, will no longer be organizationally specific and the offer of a substantial retirement program will not be a concrete inducement for work. On the other hand, the opportunity to vary the length of a given work day or to vary the days of the week in which work is performed could very well turn out to be the sources of considerable incentive value for working.

The final conclusion with regard to the adaptation of the organization to the new condition of work is that far greater imagination will need to be employed in the future than was required in the past to provide incentives for work, the organizational forms, and work and environmental conditions that will continue to make productive work acceptable in the society. The opportunity to use slave labor, as in classical cultures or a totalitarian state, or the imperative to work that is a product of the work institution being a dominant one will no longer be a basis for insuring an adequate labor supply. The productive institution will remain a coordinate one with

other institutions but within it will have to develop new ways of organizing work to make it palatable and sometimes even attractive.

Change, Time, and History

We have concluded that any single institutional area can undergo change because it is part of a multi-equal social system in which institutions are linked by virtue of a division of functions, and the correlated interdependence that occurs. No single institution is bound up in a set of values that is shared with all other institutions so that the direction and extent of its change is limited by the resistance to change of over-arching value systems.

What, then, prevents bizarre or runaway change in an institution that could disrupt a whole society? Or, what is it that limits change in a single institution if, indeed, they are independent of each other? These are two sides of the same question--why does the real-time rate of change in institutions seem different from what is theoretically possible?

A sage analyst of social organization, W. F. Ogburn, long ago pointed out the phenomenon of "cultural lag."[19/] By this he meant that change in some institutions is not responded to immediately by coordinate changes in interconnected institutions. He emphasized the imbalance that might occur because of the "lag" in response by the affected institution. For Ogburn, this was one of the mechanisms that generated social problems.

In our view, cultural lag is a way of describing the time delay between a functional change within an institution and the establishment of a new set of links with functionally interdependent institutions. The effect of such time delay is to give the appearance that each institution is held

back from too drastic changes by the inability of related institutions to adapt rapidly to such changes. Social inertia seems to result.

We can also characterize the social inertia problem as one generated by the need to keep functional balance between institutions. What monitors rate of change, not its direction, is the balancing of the distribution of functions among institutions. It takes time to absorb a change in one institution so as to rebalance the new distribution of functions among the complex of institutions.

On the other hand, within any single institution there are wide opportunities for initiating changes that are not constrained by the limits of a value system shared by all institutions. In particular, the production institution is one in which drastic and rapid changes have been initiated, especially in technology and organizational form. These changes have more to do with the logic of producing goods and providing services than they have to do with the values of other institutions, or the society as a whole. For example, there are greater similarities between the production institutions in capitalist and advanced socialist societies than there are between the values of the production institution and other institutions in each kind of society.

By the year 2001, a mere generation from now, we can anticipate vast transformations in the institutions of society. Within each institution, major changes will be internally instituted that ultimately require a balancing response from other institutions. Thus, the two sources of general social change will be the innovations within single institutions, and the adjustment of functional interdependencies among instititions.

In the institution complex, the production institution will be a major arena for intra-institutional innovation. We have indicated just a few such changes that may be anticipated. Much of this volume is devoted to filling out that picture as well as indicating some of the adjustments that will be made in adapting to functional changes in the relations between the production institution and other institutions.

FOOTNOTES

1/ Social sicence theories typically are built on historical data. Consequently, they have a likelihood of modeling the past, and possibly the present, but may have little predictive accuracy. The theory of social institutions underlying this chapter represents an ahistorical view that generates rather different predictions about the relations between work and institutions than would be made from more traditional theory.

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